WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method for assisting a customer in choosing among commodities comprising the steps of:

asking the customer for a definition of its business;

searching a decision rules database and applying decision rules to the business definition;

5   creating a set of business requirement questions based upon the applied decision rules database;

answering the set of business requirement questions by the customer;

implementing a business rule filter to the answers of the set of business requirement questions; and

recommending to the customer commodity types based upon the business rule implementation.

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

selecting, by the customer, at least one of the recommended commodity types; and

entering at least one of the recommended commodity types selected by the customer into an optimizer device for determining an optimum commodity selection for each of the selected

5   recommended commodity types for use by the customer.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the step of asking includes asking for a specific type of business the customer has to determine a business rule set to be applied.

4.   The method of claim 1 whereby the business rules generate the business requirement questions interactively through fuzzy logic   ,

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein the set of business requirement questions includes questions regarding number of employees, expected employee growth rate, whether and how many computers are needed, what type of computer processing is needed, how many telephones and what type of telephone services are needed, if the business has an existing network and what type of network, if the customer has an existing Internet connection and what type of connection, the customer's existing building plans, and what type of network security exists and is needed for the future.

6.   The method of claim 1, wherein the step of recommending further comprises the steps of:

allowing the customer to de-select at least one of the recommended commodity types;

allowing the customer to request non-recommended commodity types; and

entering the at least one of the recommended commodity types and the requested non-recommended commodity types into an optimizer device for determining optimum commodity selections for each of the recommended and requested non-recommended commodity types for use by the customer.

7.   The method of claim 2, further comprising the steps of:

identifying at least one first parameter associated with the at least one selected commodity type;

associating at least one value to the at least one first parameter;

5   calculating an estimated cost of the at least one selected commodity type based on features of the commodity that are desired by the customer;

obtaining from the customer a preference weighting on at least one second parameter;

calculating an effective cost by adjusting the estimated cost based on the preference weighting and the at least one value assigned to the parameters; and

10   presenting a list of recommended commodities to the customer containing the at least one selected commodity with a lowest effective cost.

8.   A system for assisting a customer in choosing between commodity types, comprising:

an optimizer device that is connected to a network;

a customer device for connecting to the optimizer device via the network and sending

5   business requirement information to the optimizer device,

wherein the optimizer device includes at least one database that contains information about at least one commodity type, at least one utility function, and at least one business profile for the customer, and a processing component for presenting to the customer a list of commodity types containing at least one commodity type based on the business profile for the customer and

10   the utility function for the commodity type.

9.   The system of claim 8, wherein the optimizer device includes a web server component for hosting a web site and the customer uses the customer device to visit the web site.

10.   The system of claim 8, wherein the utility function is associated with a parameter of the commodity type and is evaluated to obtain the at least one value, wherein the value represents a cost or benefit of the parameter to the customer.

11.   The system of claim 8 wherein in selecting the best commodity for the customer the system considers multiple quantities of a product, including volume discounts.

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12.   The system of claim 8, wherein the business profile of the customer includes

information regarding location of the business, number of employees, expected employee growth

rate, whether and how many computers are needed, what type of computer processing is needed,

how many telephones and what type of telephone services are needed, if the business has an

5   existing network and what type of network, if the customer has an existing Internet connection

and what type of connection, the customer's existing building plans, and what type of network

security exists and is needed for the future.

13.　　A system for assisting a customer in choosing among commodities comprising:

means for asking the customer for a definition of its business;

means for searching a decision rules database and applying decision rules to the business definition;

means for creating a set of business requirement questions based upon the applied decision rules database;

means for answering the set of business requirement questions by the customer;

means for implementing a business rule filter to the answers of the set of business requirement questions; and

means for recommending to the customer commodity types based upon the business rule implementation.
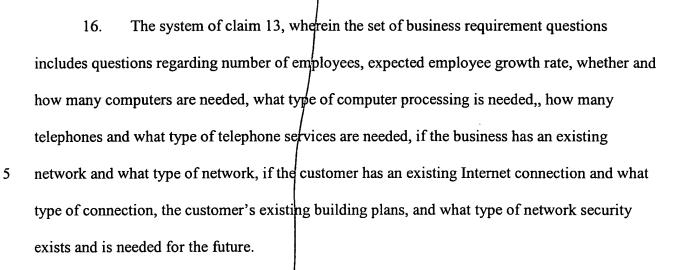
14.　　The system of claim 13, further comprising:

means for selecting, by the customer, at least one of the recommended commodity types; and

means for entering the at least one of the recommended commodity types into an optimizer device for determining an optimum commodity for each of the selected recommended commodity types for use by the customer.

15.　　The system of claim 13, wherein the means for asking includes means for asking for a specific type of business the customer has.

16.   The system of claim 13, wherein the set of business requirement questions includes questions regarding number of employees, expected employee growth rate, whether and how many computers are needed, what type of computer processing is needed,, how many telephones and what type of telephone services are needed, if the business has an existing network and what type of network, if the customer has an existing Internet connection and what type of connection, the customer's existing building plans, and what type of network security exists and is needed for the future.

17.   The system of claim 13, wherein the means for recommending further comprises:

means for allowing the customer to de-select at least one of the recommended commodity types;

means for allowing the customer to request non-recommended commodity types; and

means for entering the selected at least one of the recommended commodity types and the requested non-recommended commodity types into an optimizer device for determining optimum commodity for each of the recommended and requested non-recommended commodity types for use by the customer.

18.   The system of claim 14, further comprising:

means for identifying at least one first parameter associated with the at least one selected commodity type;

means for associating at least one value to the at least one first parameter;

means for calculating an estimated cost of the at least one selected commodity based on features of the commodity type that are desired by the customer;

means for obtaining from the customer a preference weighting on at least one second parameter;

10   means for calculating an effective cost by adjusting the estimated cost based on the preference weighting and the at least one value assigned to the parameters; and

means for presenting a list of recommended commodities to the customer containing the at least one selected commodity type with a lowest effective cost.

15   19.   The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of determining whether to optimize the recommended commodity types or create requirements for the customer to solicit bids through a Request for Proposal process for the commodity type.